

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Manufacturers Building

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 220 East Washington Street

---NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
Rockingham

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

--- VICINITY OF

STATE  
North Carolina

CODE  
37

COUNTY  
Richmond

CODE  
153

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Whittemore, Incorporated, c/o Mrs. Kay Whittemore

STREET & NUMBER  
Post Office Box 700

CITY, TOWN  
Rockingham

--- VICINITY OF

STATE  
North Carolina 28379

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Richmond County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Rockingham

STATE  
North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

---FEDERAL ---STATE ---COUNTY ---LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Manufacturers Building, a two-story brick commercial building fronting on East Washington Street, was constructed in the first years of the twentieth century to serve as the headquarters of a number of textile mills established in Richmond County in the late nineteenth century. The brick structure is rectangular in plan and like other facade-oriented architecture of the early twentieth century the northernmost portion of the building and especially the north (front) elevation is the beneficiary of certain architectural pretension while the side and rear elevations are more simply presented. Similarly this northernmost portion of the building is covered with a high hipped and slate covered roof whose ridge line is parallel with the front elevation, while the rest of the building is covered with a gable roof on a north-south axis.

The three bay front elevation features cream colored brick laid up in common bond with fine, narrow joints; this brickwork barely wraps the corners of the side elevations which are of plain red brick laid up in one to five common bond. Quoins enframing the front elevation and marking its three-bay division rise from the building's foundation to the frieze carrying across the front of the building on which is centered "MANUFACTURERS BUILDING." The frieze is terminated at either end by an applied acanthus leaf. A wide overhanging eave, supported by molded modillion blocks, carries across the top frieze and continues for a short distance along the side elevations. A balustrade, comprised of solid molded piers (continuing the visual emphasis of the quoining below) and containing reticulated, blind railing, carries across the top of the elevation partially concealing the aforementioned hipped roof featuring imbricated shingles with shaped metal terminals at the ends of its ridge line.

The outside bays of the front elevation's first and second stories contain paired one over one sash windows set in simply molded surrounds with granite sills. The central entrance, comprised of two doors (probably replacements for the originals) surmounted by a transom, is at the center of a recessed bay whose splayed side walls feature a molded baseboard and chair rail. The one-story porch, projecting in front of the center bay, is comprised of simple metal columns resting on a granite platform (surrounded by steps on its three sides) and rising to its molded cornice above which a plain blind balustrade carries around the porch's flat roof which serves as a balcony for the second story. A quartet of tall one over one sash windows surmounted by individual transoms occupies the center bay of the second story; when raised their height allows one to step across the sill onto the porch roof.

The long side walls of the building feature asymmetrical fenestration with single, paired and diminutive one over one sash windows reflecting the interior room arrangement. They are set in arch-headed openings where a double row of headers laid on end form the arch; the sills are cut granite. A narrow brick cornice carries along the top of these elevations while the chimney stacks of interior end chimneys occur at intervals above the walls denoting the fireplaces provided the offices inside. The rear of the building has a symmetrical three bay arrangement featuring single one over one sash windows at both levels with a central entrance on the first story; here a wide door is flanked by side lights and a wide transom.

The interior of the first story follows a center hall plan with a long hall stretching from the shallow vestibule at the front (north end) of the building to the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

back elevation. The finish of the hall features a high wainscoting of vertical tongue and groove boards fitted between a molded baseboard and chair rail; the wall above the wainscot is smoothly plastered as is the ceiling.

Five communicating rooms, with entrances nearly opposite each other, are arranged en suite as offices along either side of the hall. The doors connecting them to the hall have four horizontal wood panels in the lower portion, a large upper pane of glass, and are surmounted by a glass transom. Their surrounds are thickly molded while the shorter closet doors, featuring five horizontal panels, have plain unmolded surrounds. The offices have plastered walls finished with a molded baseboard and chair rail. The fire openings are fitted with decorated iron coal grates; the mantels are rather simple with channelled pilasters rising from a roll molded base, along either side of a plain frieze, to a projecting shelf supported at the center by a shaped brace. As these offices have served a variety of uses since their construction they are painted in differing colors throughout the first floor.

On the west side of the hall the three northernmost rooms are en suite, and the southernmost two communicate with each other. Between the entrances to the second and third rooms of the first suite the walls splay inward to form the stair well. The stair rises along the south side of the well to a landing at mid-point and continues in an easterly direction along the north side of the well to the second story. The railing is comprised of square newels, a molded handrail and turned balusters. On the east side of the hall the northern half of the building contains a suite of offices originally comprised of three rooms however the center room has been divided into a small anteroom/passage with two small offices behind it.

Two brick vaults, set back to back, occupy the center portion of the east block of offices. The northernmost of the two can be entered from the southernmost of the rooms forming the above suite of offices. It contains a large metal safe with "Robert L. Steele" painted in gold on its door. The second vault accessible through double metal doors from the northernmost of the two rooms forming the back suite of offices on the east side contains two safes. The larger and more impressive one is identified as belonging to the Roberdel Mill as that name is painted on its door while the smaller one is unmarked.

The front third of the second story of the Manufacturers Building is occupied by a large L-shaped meeting/counting room with the outside of the "L" carrying across the front elevation and down the west side. A bathroom, ante-room and small office are fitted into the angle of the "L". The rear two thirds of the building was given over to a large meeting room which was sub-divided for offices in the 1950s. The meeting/counting room remains remarkably unchanged since the building's construction retaining its dark stained baseboard, chair rail, picture molding and door and window surrounds. An enclosure--its original function as yet unknown--occupies the northwest corner of the room.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Ca. 1904

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Manufacturers Building, a two-story brick commercial building, was erected in 1904 to serve as the administrative offices for five of the most important textile mills in Richmond County--Pee Dee Manufacturing Company, Steele's Mills, Roberdel Mills, Midway Mills, and Hannah Pickett Mills. While Robert L. Steele, Sr., was the tie that bound the textile industries in the county together, it was his son, Robert L. Steele, Jr., who provided the impetus for the construction of the Manufacturers Building and the consolidation of the mills offices in one location. From 1904 until the mid-1930s the textile industry in the county was directed from the offices provided on the first floor of the Manufacturers Building while general stockholders meetings and other functions were held on the second floor. Questions of wages, prices, methods of operation and working standards were decided here for the textile industry whose growth encouraged the economic vitality of the Richmond County. In the mid-1930s the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company--the last of the above mills to retain an office in the building--removed their offices to the mill plant and later, in 1937 sold the Manufacturers Building to a private owner who, in 1969, sold it to the present owner Kay Whittemore.

### Criteria Assessment:

- A. The Manufacturers Building, as the central administrative offices of five of the important late-19th century textile mill corporations in Richmond County, is significant for its association with that industry which dominated the county economy from the late 19th century until well into the 20th century.
- B. As the headquarters of five mills linked by family ownership, the building is associated with the Steele, Cole and Leake families who were among the early settlers of the county and developers of the textile industry for several generations, and who have continued to exert influence in Richmond County's political and business circles.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Textile manufacturing in North Carolina began about 1815. The next quarter century witnessed the erection of twenty-five cotton mills scattered among twelve counties. Yet the state remained overwhelmingly agricultural, and while New England transformed textile manufacturing into a major industry, no such phenomenon threatened the status quo of North Carolina's rural society. Smaller and more isolated than their northern counterparts, North Carolina's antebellum factories were designed to serve only the communities where they operated. Not until the Civil War forced new directions for the state's economy did textile production assume a role of leadership, and for many years much of that leadership came from Richmond County.

The first textile factory in Richmond County (the fifth in the state) was chartered on December 28, 1833, and began production in 1836. Called Richmond Mill, it was incorporated by the firm name of Richmond Manufacturing Company and was located on the site of an old grist mill just south of Rockingham near the bottom of the Great Falls. Organizers of the cotton mill included Walter F. Leak, William L. Cole, Francis T. Leak, and General Alfred Dockery. Richmond Mill, a two-story wooden structure about 100x150 feet, operated for nearly thirty years before being burned by Union troops in 1865.

Changes in the postwar years created an economic climate in which Richmond County textile mills flourished. Most were located in or around Rockingham. Until the mid-twentieth century, the manufacturing firms were owned and operated by families that were related either through direct descendancy or intermarriage. Brief historical sketches of the various mills illustrate the familial and business relationships provide a background for a discussion of the Manufacturers Building in Rockingham, the common headquarters for five major mills.

Destruction in the Civil War wiped out textile manufacturing in Richmond County, but in 1869 the railroad came to Rockingham and rejuvenated the industry. With potentially new markets at greater distances, Walter F. Leak, organizer of the old Richmond Mill, established a new cotton factory called Great Falls Mill just east of the earlier site. It began operation in 1870. Those who helped Leak incorporate Great Falls Mill included his son-in-law, Colonel John Wall Leak, and Robert Leak Steele.

In 1874, Robert L. Steele, one of the promoters of the Great Falls Mill, his brother Walter L. Steele, and W. C. Leak formed the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company, which began operating in 1876. Robert L. Steele remained president of the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company until 1882 (he was succeeded by his brother Walter), when he left to become founder and president of the Roberdel Mill. He retained his position on the Board of Directors of the Pee Dee Company.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Roberdel (softened pronunciation of Robert L.) Mill and village were located about three miles northeast of Rockingham. In 1902 a second mill was built in East Rockingham and named Roberdel No. 2. Both factories were under the immediate supervision of William Entwistle, whose son George P. Entwistle became president of the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company in 1918.<sup>8</sup>

About the same time that Steele was founding Roberdel Mill No. 1, T. C. Leak, H. C. Wall, and O. D. McRae were forming Leak, Wall & McRae, Inc.,<sup>9</sup> and constructing Midway Mills about a mile south of Rockingham on Hitchcock Creek. This mill had the distinction of being the only textile mill built in Richmond County in the late 1800s that was not organized or promoted by Robert L. Steele.

Robert L. Steele was probably Richmond County's greatest entrepreneur and promoter of the textile industry. In addition to being the founder and president of the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company and Roberdel Mills, Steele was the driving force behind the creation of Steele's Mills on February 16, 1895. The corporation was named for the family and a list of the incorporators shows why: Robert Leak Steele, Sr., Thomas W. Steele, Robert Leak Steele, Jr.,<sup>10</sup> Thomas W. Steele, Jr., Walter F. Steele, William H. Steele, and Stephen W. Steele. Robert L. Steele, Sr., died before the mill and village were completed on Hitchcock Creek near Rockingham, but under the presidency of his son Robert, Jr., Steele's Mills became one of the first in the South to install automatic looms, an innovation that revolutionized the weaving industry.<sup>11</sup>

Two other prominent mills in Rockingham were closely associated with the enterprising Steele family. The Ledbetter Mill, founded by Thomas B. Ledbetter in 1881, was for some years operated by Robert L. Steele, Jr. It is the only family textile industry still in existence out of the many established in the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The current owner, James M. Ledbetter, is the great grandson of Robert Leak Steele, Sr.

Although not chartered until 1906, the Hannah Pickett Mill was also associated with Robert L. Steele, Sr. and ultimately with the Manufacturers Building. W. B. Cole, nephew of Steele, Sr., was its founding father and president for most of its active years.<sup>13</sup> Named in honor of his grandmother, the first Hannah Pickett plant was constructed of concrete blocks and faced King Edward Street in Rockingham.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Robert L. Steele, Sr., was the tie that bound the textile industries in Richmond County together. He passed his role on to his son, Robert L. Steele, Jr., and through the son came the impetus for the Manufacturers Building in Rockingham. On November 13, 1899, Robert L. Steele, Jr., and his wife M. E. Steele, sold a lot between Washington and Franklin streets in Rockingham (33 foot frontage) to the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company; Leake, Wall & McRae Mill; Steele's Mills; and Roberdel Manufacturing Company. Purchase price for the 6,316.2 square feet of lot was \$750.<sup>15</sup> On this lot now stands the Manufacturers Building which, according to local tradition, was constructed in 1904.<sup>16</sup>

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

The Manufacturers Building served as the corporation headquarters for the Rockingham based industries dominated by the Steele family, with offices for the business leaders of five corporations operating seven separate mills. Offices were provided for the presidents, secretaries, and treasurers of the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company, Steele's Mills, Roberdel Mills, Midway (Leak, Wall & McRae) Mills, and Hannah Pickett Mills. Business offices were all located on the first floor while the spacious second floor was reserved primarily for civic and social functions. The large room on the front of the building (now encumbered by partitions and railings) was a meeting room for civic and business groups, with an occasional meeting for the joint boards of directors. Through the large double doors at the head of the stairs was a spacious ballroom where elegant cotillions once attracted members of fashionable society from parts of both North and South Carolina.<sup>17</sup>

Stockholder meetings were held in the upstairs rooms at least once a year per corporation.<sup>18</sup> For more than thirty years the textile industry in Richmond County was guided by decisions from within the Manufacturers Building, decisions regarding mergers, property acquisition, prices, labor, wages, and working standards within the factories. There too the bookkeepers made out the mill payrolls and dispensed money to the various superintendents for delivery to the workers. Two vaults on the east side of the building were constructed to house the safes, of which one large and two smaller remain. According to local tradition,<sup>19</sup> the manufacturers believed the safes offered greater security than the local bank.

One of the most spectacular events associated with the Manufacturers Building was a shooting that took place in front of the structure on August 15, 1925. On that day W. B. Cole, president of Hannah Pickett Mills, whose office was in the Manufacturers Building, shot and killed William Ormond who had brazenly admitted to improper relations with Cole's daughter Elizabeth. Cole was arrested and charged with murder. He used his fortune to hire a battery of nine lawyers from all over the state,<sup>20</sup> and in the sensational trial that followed, Cole was acquitted of the charges. He continued as president of Hannah Pickett Mills<sup>21</sup> which he had developed into the largest textile industry in Richmond County by 1930.

The Great Depression and a series of labor disputes nearly crippled the textile industry in the early 1930s. Through mergers and disposal of non profit bearing properties, the larger industries survived, but post World War II developments in the national textile industry brought an end to the era of family owned textile mills in Richmond County.

Following the war the trend of the textile industry in the United States was to merge smaller units into huge conglomerates. Independent mills, no longer able to compete with the giants, began selling to interests based in large cities like New York. By the end of 1946, all but one of the industries in Richmond County had

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 4

dissolved, merged, or sold out to corporations such as Robbins, In., Burlington Industries, and J. P. Stevens & Company.<sup>22</sup> Only Ledbetter Manufacturing Company refused to submit and remains today as a family business.

The original functions of the Manufacturers Building ceased about a decade before the demise of most of the family owned industries. Events leading to its abandonment began about 1920 when the newly elected mayor of Rockingham, F. Donald Phillips, proposed that the city council levy a tax on all previously untaxed industrial property within the town limits. Angered by the suggestion, the textile manufacturers threatened to move out if such a tax were imposed. Although the city council refused to enact a tax ordinance at that time, or any time thereafter, the yearly possibility caused some<sup>23</sup> of the owners to move their offices from the Manufacturers Building to the mill sites. The economic troubles of the Great Depression forced others out of the Manufacturers Building, as expenses for maintaining the structure began to prove burdensome. Steele's Mills pulled out about 1932 leaving only the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company to occupy the building. A few years later, W. C. Leak, then president of the Pee Dee Mills, moved his office back to the mill plant.<sup>24</sup> On May 31, 1937, the Pee Dee Manufacturing Company sold the abandoned office building and lot (64' x 191.4') to Mrs. H. C. Rancke for about \$12,500.<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Rancke was the former Hannah Pickett Cole whose ancestors had been prominent in the settlement of Rockingham. Her husband, H. C. Rancke, had for some years been employed by the textile manufacturers as a rate adjuster, freight dispatcher, and liason with the railroads. The Ranckes rented office space in the Manufacturers Building to various businesses that included doctors and dentist offices, insurance companies, a radio station, dance studio, and beauty parlors.<sup>26</sup> These occupants added partitions, doors, shelving, storage rooms, etc. During the occupancy by radio station WAYN in the 1940s and 1950s, the large upstairs ballroom<sup>27</sup> was partitioned into offices and control rooms and paneled with accoustical material.

Mrs. Rancke sold the building and lot to Mrs. Kay Whittemore on December 22, 1969.<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Whittemore, owner and manager of Kay's, a fashion shop, intends to restore the Manufacturers Building and lease the office space.<sup>29</sup> City planners and interested citizens hope that such a restoration will spur a revitalization of the downtown area.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, Third Edition, 1973), 317-318, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina.

<sup>2</sup>Spirit of Richmond: Richmond County Magazine, vol. 1, July 28, 1932, p. 33. Copy in Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Spirit of Richmond; and James E. and Ida C. Hunneycutt, History of Richmond County (Rockingham, 1976), 351, hereinafter cited as Hunneycutt, Richmond County History.

<sup>3</sup>Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 352; and Researcher's interview with Judge and Mrs. F. Donald Phillips of Rockingham, January 24, 1979, hereinafter cited as Phillips interview. Mrs. Phillips is the great granddaughter of Walter F. Leak, founder of the Richmond Mill. See also Spirit of Richmond, 33.

<sup>4</sup>Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 4 volumes, 1954-1965) I, 374, hereinafter cited as Sharpe, A New Geography.

<sup>5</sup>Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 352-353; Phillips interview. Judge Phillips has been a resident of Rockingham since 1914. The factory operated until 1930 when crippling effects of the Great Depression forced it to close down. Hopes of restoring Great Falls Mill and converting it into a textile museum were dashed when it burned in 1972.

<sup>6</sup>Incorporation Papers (inactive), Office of the Secretary of State, Administration Building, Raleigh, Pee Dee Manufacturing Company, hereinafter cited as Incorporation Papers with name of company. See also Spirit of Richmond, 33.

<sup>7</sup>Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 356, 372; Spirit of Richmond, 33; and Phillips interview.

<sup>8</sup>Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 356-357; and Spirit of Richmond, 33.

<sup>9</sup>Incorporation Papers, Leak, Wall & McRae; and Aerial Map of Rockingham, 1975, City Planning Department, Rockingham, hereinafter cited as Aerial Map of Rockingham. Sunoco Products manufactured paper goods and should not be confused with the oil company. Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 359. The mill fell victim to the economic depression of the 1930s and the property was sold to Sunoco Products.

<sup>10</sup>Incorporation Papers, Steele's Mills.

<sup>11</sup>Richmond County Estates Papers, State Archives, Raleigh, Robert L. Steele, Sr.; Phillips interview (Mrs. Phillips is a descendant of Robert L. Steele); and Spirit of Richmond, 33.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 6

<sup>12</sup> Researcher's interview with Kay Whittemore, January 24, 1979, hereinafter cited as Whittemore interview. Mrs. Whittemore, current owner of the Manufacturers Building, has been a resident of Rockingham for more than thirty years. See also Incorporation Papers, Ledbetter Mill.

<sup>13</sup> Incorporation Papers, Hannah Pickett Mills.

<sup>14</sup> Phillips interview; and Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 365. See also Spirit of Richmond, 33. New buildings were added until the mill eventually occupied 353,583 square feet with a warehouse claiming an additional 30,000 square feet.

<sup>15</sup> Richmond County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Richmond County Courthouse, Rockingham, Deed Book NNN, p. 324, hereinafter cited as Richmond County Deed Book.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Cole of Rockingham, whose family was long associated with the mills, stated that the Manufacturers Building was constructed before his birth in 1906. (Researcher's interview with Robert L. Cole, January 3, 1979.) Judge Phillips said that the building was about ten years old when he arrived in Rockingham in 1914, and that he had been told that it was built in 1904. (Phillips interview.) Since the property was purchased in November, 1899 (Richmond County Deed Book NNN, p. 324), the Manufacturers Building was completed between 1900 and 1906, leaving 1904 as a good possibility. If the purpose of the textile firms in purchasing the lot was to centralize the administrative functions of the four corporations, the owners and operators possibly worked in temporary offices while construction of the new building was underway. Such offices may have been quartered in the old Ussery Store which stood on the lot until the early twentieth century. William D. Ussery owned a much larger lot before selling parcels to various mill owners in the early 1890s. See references to previous sale and description in deed from Robert L. Steele to Pee Dee Manufacturing Company and others, Richmond County Deed Book NNN, p. 324. See also second deed from Robert L. Steele, Deed Book 105, p. 121. By 1917 the four textile firms had acquired a total of 12,249.6 square feet of land between Washington and Franklin streets, including that on which the Manufacturers Building was standing. Richmond County Deed Book NNN, p. 324; Deed Book 000, p. 57; Deed Book 104, p. 304; and Deed Book 105, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> Description of the interior and uses of the rooms came from Judge Phillips. Phillips interview.

<sup>18</sup> Call for meetings in Incorporation Papers. See also Phillips interview.

<sup>19</sup> Phillips interview and visual inspection of the building by the researcher.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

<sup>20</sup>Accounts of the murder and trial in the Rockingham Post Dispatch, August 20-October, 1925. Special reference is made to letters from Bill (William) Ormond to Elizabeth Cole, about middle of October, 1924, and to W. B. Cole, February 14, 1925. These letters were submitted as evidence at the trial. Copies in Survey and Planning Branch, Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. See also Stanly News Herald (Albemarle), October 6, 1925; and a recounting in the Monroe Enquirer, July 7, 1960.

<sup>21</sup>Spirit of Richmond, 33.

<sup>22</sup>Dissolution Papers, filed with Incorporation Papers, Office of the Secretary of State, Administration Building, Raleigh, Pee Dee Manufacturing Company, Hannah Pickett Mills, Steele's Mills, and Leak, Wall & McRae Mills. See also Hunneycutt, Richmond County History, 361, 363, 364-365, 368-369; Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina, I, 374.

<sup>23</sup>Phillips interview. Judge Fitzroy Donald Phillips was elected mayor in 1919 and served a two year term. Judge Phillips was a lawyer in service in World War I when elected to the post. He is now eighty-six years of age. He was personally acquainted with the mill owners from 1914 until the demise of the family industries.

<sup>24</sup>Phillips interview.

<sup>25</sup>Richmond County Deed Book 231, p. 588.

<sup>26</sup>Whittemore interview; and Phillips interview.

<sup>27</sup>Whittemore interview; and visual observation by the researcher.

<sup>28</sup>Richmond County Deed Book 520, p. 551.

<sup>29</sup>Whittemore interview.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Monroe Enquirer, July 7, 1960.

Ormond Letters. Bill (William) Ormond to Elizabeth Cole, middle October, 1924. Bill (William) Ormond to W. B. Cole, February 14, 1925.

Richmond County Records. Richmond County Courthouse. Rockingham, North Carolina.  
Subgroups: Deeds, Estates Papers, Miscellaneous, Wills.

Rockingham Post Dispatch, August 20-October, 1925.

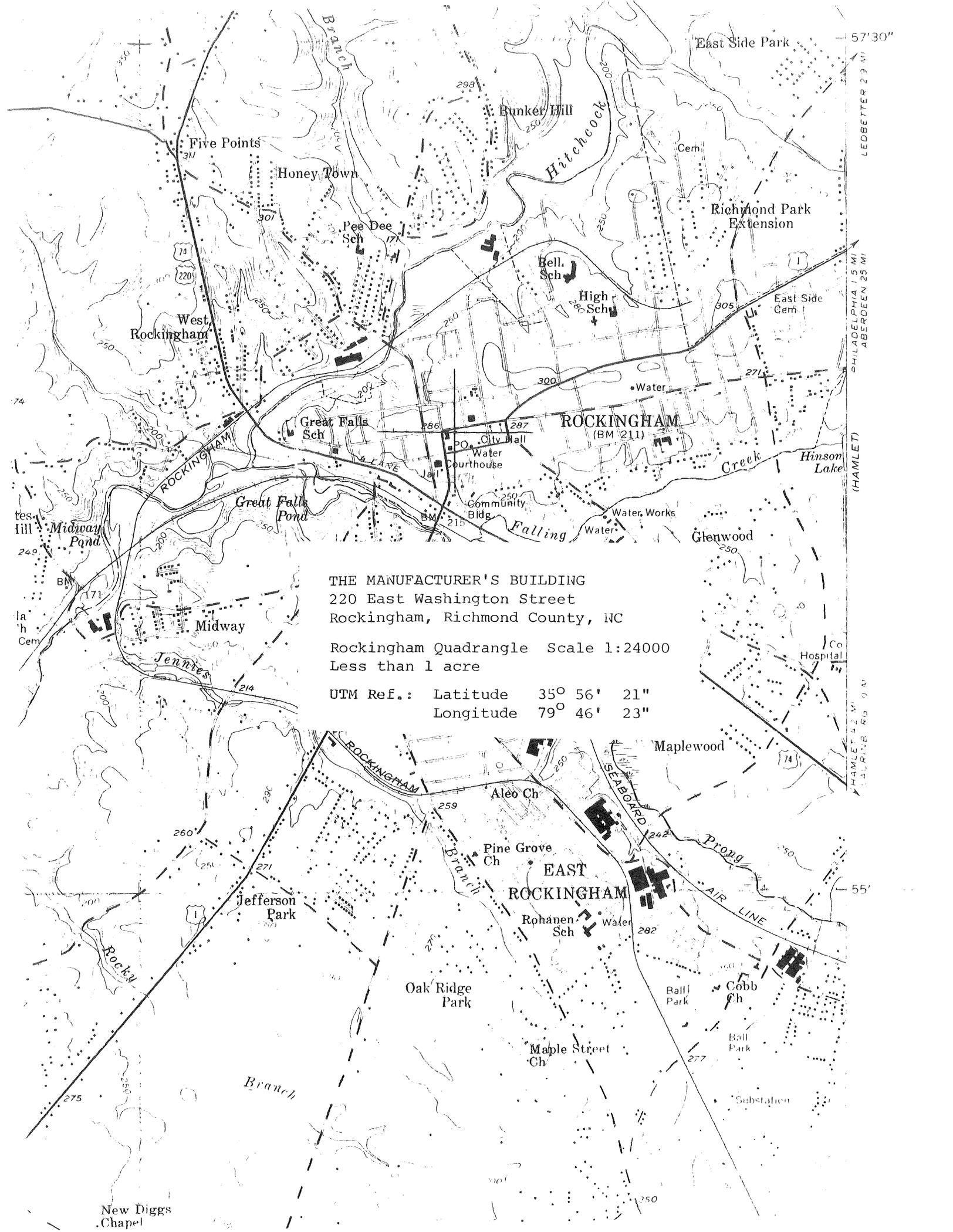
Secretary of State Records. Administration Building. Raleigh, North Carolina.  
Incorporation Papers. Dissolution Papers.

Sharpe, Bill. A New Geography of North Carolina. 4 vols. Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1954-1965.

Spirit of Richmond: Richmond County Magazine. Volume I. July 28, 1932.

Stanly News Herald. Albemarle. October 6, 1925.





THE MANUFACTURER'S BUILDING  
 220 East Washington Street  
 Rockingham, Richmond County, NC

Rockingham Quadrangle Scale 1:24000  
 Less than 1 acre

UTM Ref.: Latitude 35° 56' 21"  
 Longitude 79° 46' 23"

57°30"  
 LEDBETTER 29 MI  
 PHILADELPHIA 15 MI  
 ABERDEEN 25 MI  
 (HAMLET)  
 HAMLET 42 MI  
 LAURINE 66 MI

55'

New Diggs Chapel

